

Environmental Purchasing Policy: A Model for State and Local Government

This model is intended to serve as a general guide to organizations in the development of environmental purchasing policy.

Policy Statement

Priority in procurement will be given to green products and services including construction.

Purpose

The policy is adopted in order to protect the health and safety of workers and citizens.

Background

Local and state governments in Washington State, combined, purchase more than \$4 billion in goods and services each year. Many of these products contribute to problems in the overall environment, including contamination of the air and water, and depletion of environmental resources. In some instances, products require special waste disposal and reporting procedures which can be cumbersome and expensive. Furthermore, local government employees using these products may be exposed to compounds that are potentially harmful to their health.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

Available locally means that one or more businesses within the county/city or immediate surrounding areas are able to provide goods and services in a timely manner, and in sufficient quantity and quality to meet a specific department/agency need.

Biodegradable means the ability of a substance, material, or product ingredient to readily decompose by the action of microbes.

Chlorofluorocarbon, (CFC) refers to the family of compounds of chlorine, fluorine, and carbon. CFC's contribute to the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, and have been used as an ingredient for refrigerants, solvents, and for blowing plastic-foam insulation and packaging. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer calls for complete elimination of CFC production.

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is the procurement of products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. This comparison should be the complete life cycle assessment of the products.

Environmentally Preferable Products are less harmful than the next best alternative, having characteristics including, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Bio-based
- Biodegradable
- Carcinogen-free
- Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC)- free
- Does not reduce the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Durable
- Energy efficient
- Heavy metal free
- Less hazardous
- Locally manufactured
- Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content
- Made from rapidly renewable materials
- Made of recycled content
- Minimal packaging and/or manufacturing take-back of packaging program
- Persistent, bioaccumulative toxic (PBT)-free
- Recyclable
- Reduced green house gas emissions
- Reusable or with reusable parts
- Resource efficient
- Upgradeable
- Water efficient

Green building practices means the incorporation of environmental, health, and waste prevention criteria in building design, site-planning and preparation, materials acquisition, construction or remodeling, deconstruction, and waste disposal.

Integrated pest management means the use of a combination of pest control methods including improved sanitation, mechanical, physical, biological, or chemical means.

Life Cycle Assessment considers raw material acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, operation, maintenance, disposal and re-use of the product or service.

Post-consumer recycled material refers to material that has served its intended use and has been discarded for disposal or recovery, having completed its life as a consumer item, and is used as a raw material for new products.

Practicable means satisfactory and within reason when considering price, performance, availability, compatibility with specified operation, and public safety.

Price-preference means a percentage of increase in price that (jurisdiction) will pay to obtain a designated product or service.

Processed-chlorine free paper refers to paper that is manufactured using a percentage of post-consumer recycled paper fiber (that may contain residues of chlorine) and is whitened without adding chlorine or chlorine derivatives.

Rainforest hardwood/tropical wood means wood that originates from trees grown in a rainforest.

Recyclable refers to a material or product that can be reprocessed, remanufactured, or reused.

Recycled Products are products manufactured with waste material that has been recovered or diverted from solid waste.

Sustainable (green) services are acquired from a supplier who has a green operational policy and whose internal practices promote sustainability.

Policy Requirements

1. Within one month of the date this policy is enacted, the head of the Purchasing Department shall designate an environmental purchasing coordinator to lead an environmental purchasing task force and every department head shall assign a senior staff member to participate.
2. The agency shall institute practices that reduce waste and result in the purchase of fewer products whenever practicable and cost effective, but without reducing safety or workplace quality.
3. Products that are durable, long lasting, reusable or refillable are preferred whenever feasible.
4. All products for which the US EPA as established minimum recycled content standard guidelines shall contain the highest post-consumer content practicable, but no less than the minimum recycled content standards established by the US EPA.
5. Where available and cost effective, green products and services, including construction, that are of equal or better performance and quality, will be purchased. In determining cost effectiveness, a department should give consideration to the costs and benefits that accrue, in the shorter and longer term to the public.

6. For all bid solicitations (e.g. requests for proposal, requests for quote, requests for standing offer and tender calls), environmental factors or impact will be considered when requirements are defined.
7. Green procurement principles will be applied to construction projects beginning with the design stage.
8. Each department will be responsible for ensuring that its personnel have sufficient training about the environment and green procurement to carry out the directives in this policy.
9. Each department will be responsible for reporting EPP purchases in its annual performance report on how the requirements in this policy are being met and the results achieved in greening departmental procurement. Feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be obtained from sources such as departmental internal audits and program evaluations.
10. Management will provide agency-wide feedback regarding the progress of EPP purchasing of all agency departments.

References

Green Seal provides useful information and best practices for green procurement. Green Seal contains product profiles that include information on the environmental criteria that should be considered when purchasing the product. Its web site is at <http://www.greenseal.org/>

USGBC LEED Building Standards provide the accepted process for certifying green buildings for the state and others, and is found at www.usgbc.org

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is the accepted international standards making organization for wood products and is found at www.fsc.org

The Northwest Product Stewardship Council is a group of government organizations that works with businesses and nonprofit groups to integrate product stewardship principles into the policy and economic structures of the Pacific Northwest and is found at www.productstewardship.net

The International Organization for Standardization has published the Standards Compendium: ISO 14000 - Environmental management. It also includes draft International Standards. For more information visit the ISO website at <http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/prods-services/otherpubs/iso14000/index.html>

Appendix A: Sample Procurement Determination Form

Item: _____

____ This item is required to meet Environmentally Preferable Purchasing guidelines as described in [Agency's policy, resolution or legislation identification information].

____ I have considered the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing guidelines and searched for product or service options that meet them.

____ Compliance with [Agency's policy identification] was not attainable for this purchase because:

____ Item is not available within a reasonable period of time.

(Need date: _____ Date available: _____)

____ Item fails to meet a performance standard in the specifications.

Specifically, _____

____ Item is not available, or is not available from 2 or more sources.

Market research was performed by calling ____ (insert number) vendors, but only _____ (enter name) was able to supply the item.

____ Item was only available at an unreasonable price (i.e., EPP item cost more than non-compliant item).

Price of EPP item: _____

Price of non-compliant item: _____

____ Compliance would conflict with state or federal law requiring that:

Signature of Purchaser

Printed Name of Purchaser

Date